DARK HORSE COMICS®

STAR WARS
EMPIRE'S END
2 OF 2

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Rage of the Emperor

Emperor Palpatine is determined to rebuild his line of clones with the Jedi blood of the Ysanna shamans and of Leia Organa Solo's children. But his last clone body is rapidly nearing its end, its life span shortened by the volcanic anger he feels toward the Jedi and the Rebel Alliance.

Vowing to bring the Rebel Alliance to its knees, Palpatine launches hyperspace projectiles against Rebel troopships . . . and against the Rebel Command Base on the ancient Nespis VIII space city.

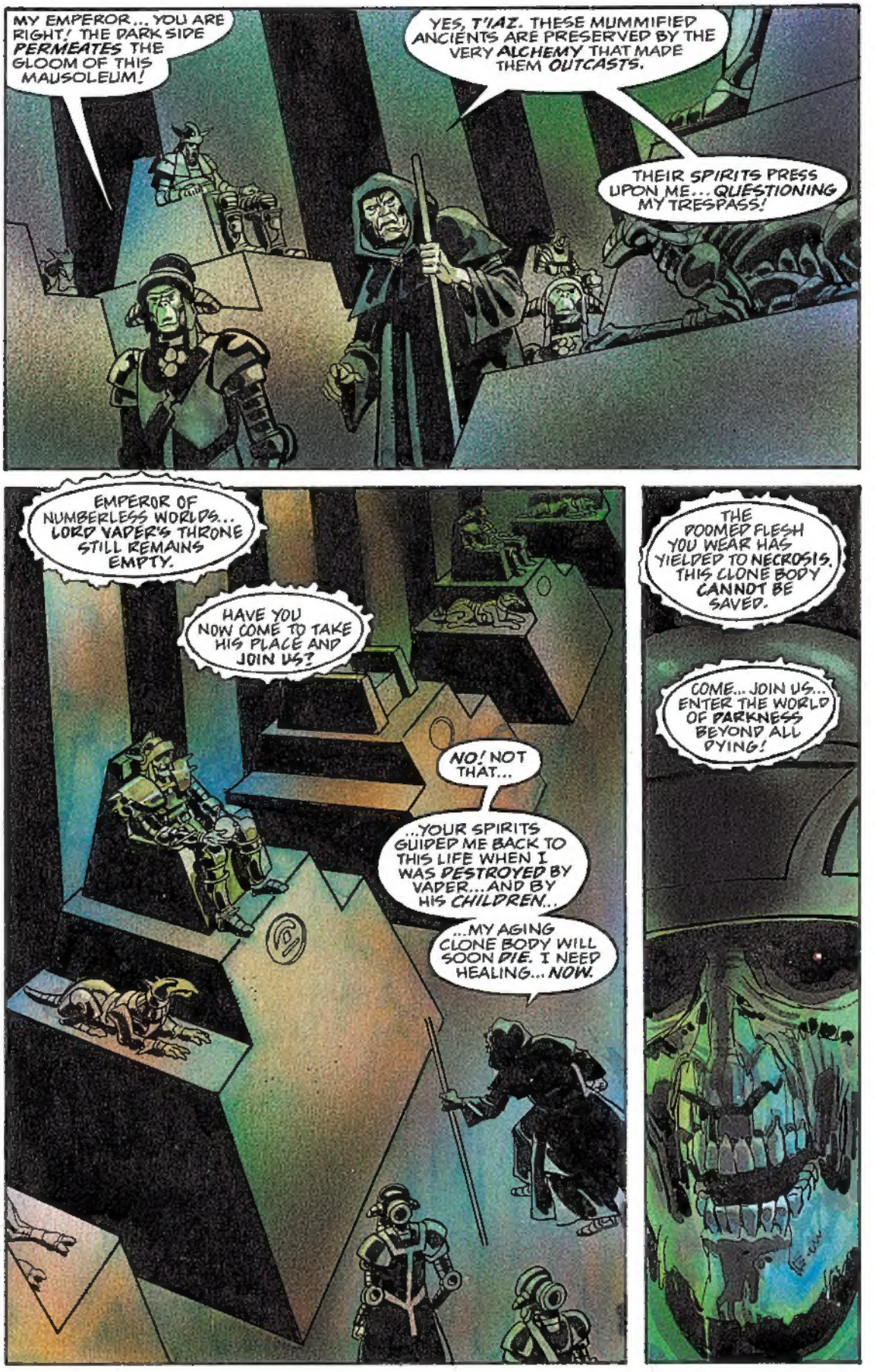
Thanks to a faulty timing mechanism, the Alliance leaders are able to evacuate Nespis VIII seconds before it is annihilated. To further avoid the Galaxy Gun's deadly precision, the Rebel fleet is forced to disperse throughout the galaxy.

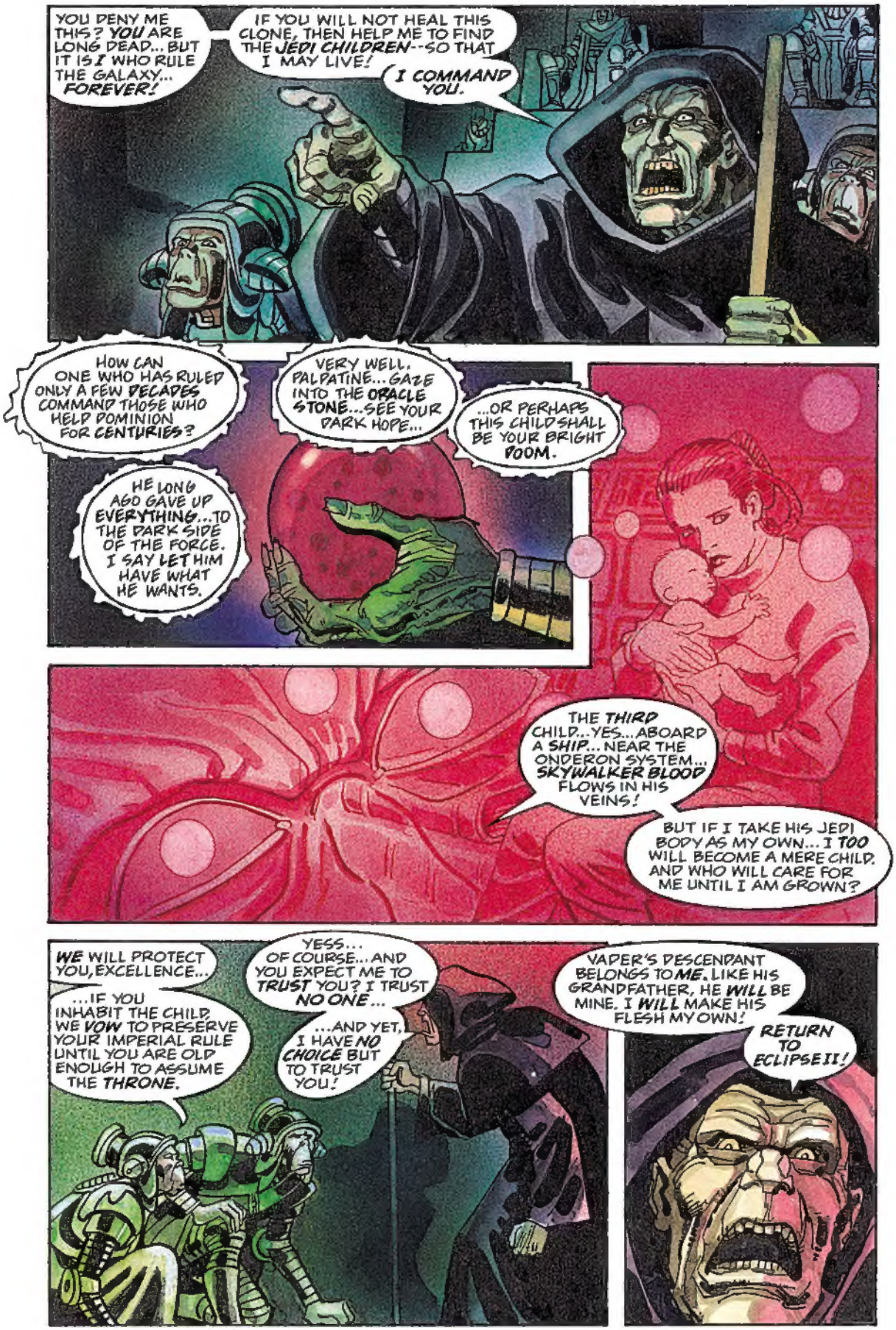
As Han and Leia prepare to take their family once again into exile, four Jedi Knights — Luke Skywalker, Kam Solusar, Empatojayos Brand, and Rayf Ysanna — journey to Ossus to confer with the Ysanna Chief, Okko, about setting up a secret command base on the planet. They arrive moments after Okko and the other shamans are seized by Imperial dark-side warriors for use in the Emperor's cloning experiments.

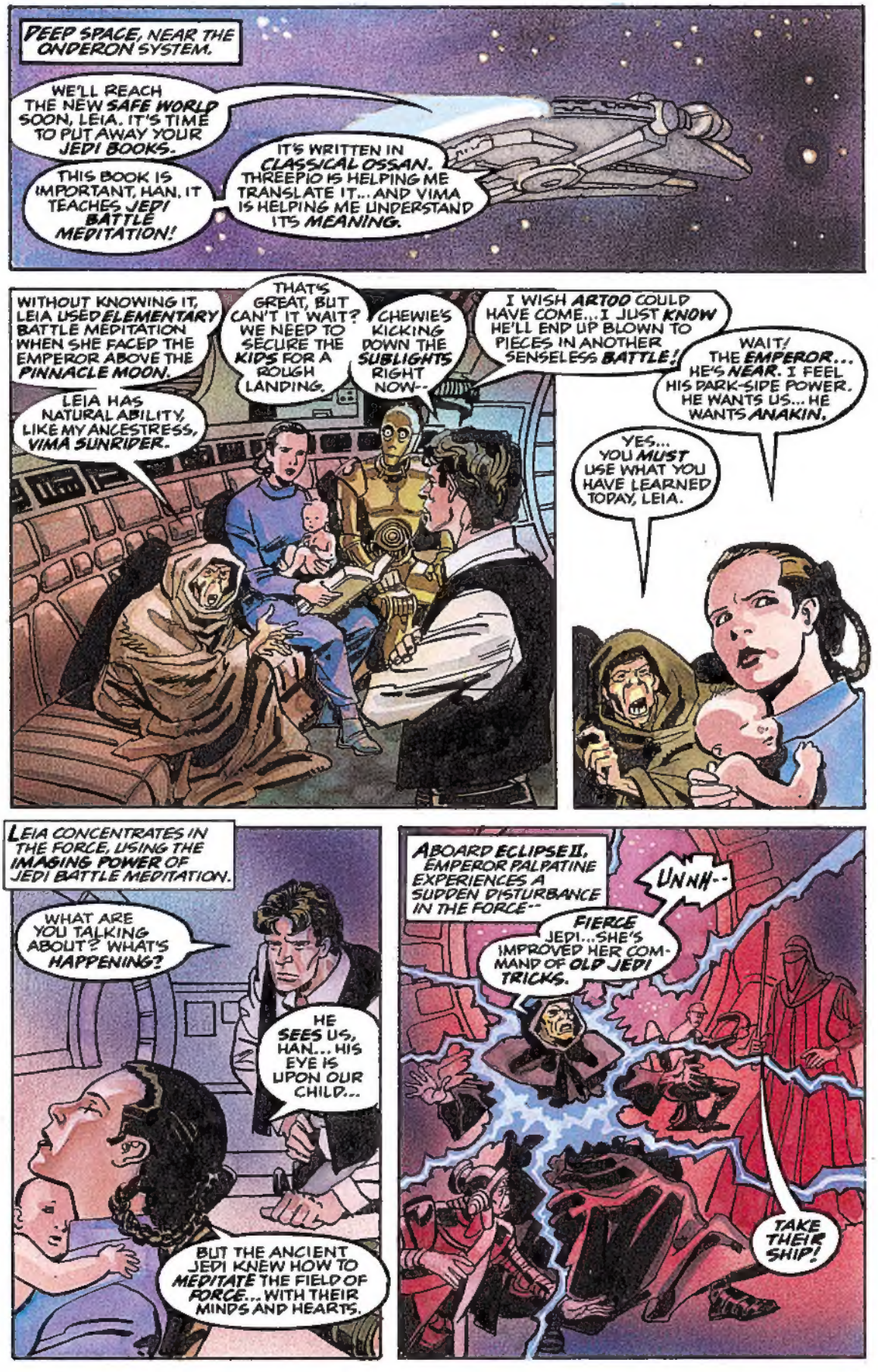
Tracking the kidnappers to their refuge on the lifeless planet Vjun, the four Jedi defeat the darksiders in a climactic battle . . . and find Okko and his companions frozen in carbonite. In the name of all the Jedi, Luke vows to hunt down the Emperor and put an end, once and for all, to his cruel reign over the Galaxy.

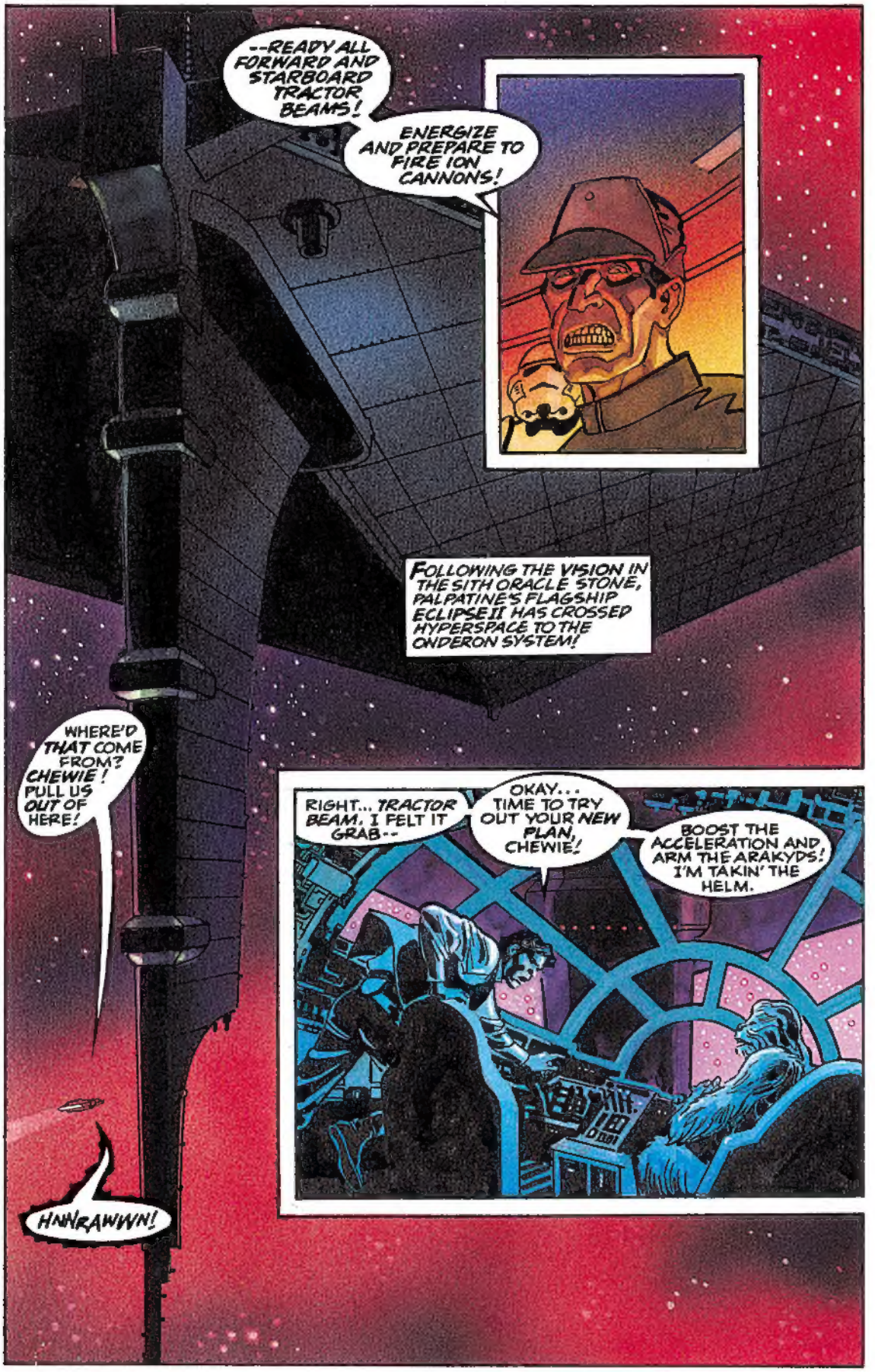
But Luke's vow will be difficult to accomplish. With two of his adepts, Palpatine has journeyed to Korriban, a world of the ancient Sith, seeking healing for flesh ravaged by the energies of his dark power.

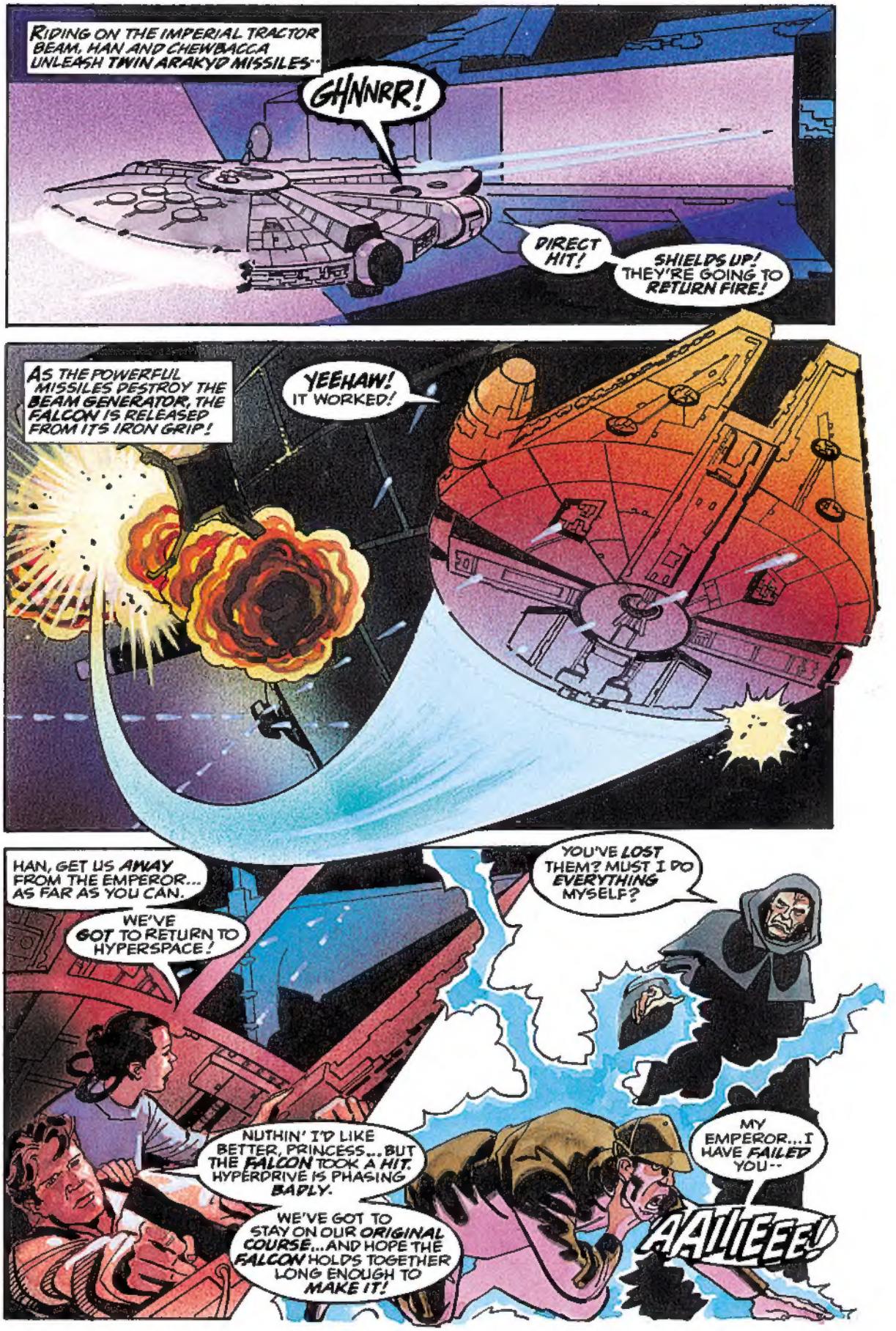
THE PLANET KORRIBAN, IN THE VALLEY OF THE DARK LORDS.
PALPATINE, EMPEROR OF A VAST GALAXY, IS DRAWN ONCE AGAIN TO THE DARK MAGNIFICENCE OF THESE SITH RUINS.
IT HAS BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE I LAST STOOD ON THIS LOST WORLD.
IT IS A PLACE STILL POTENT WITH POWER.
THE ANCIENTS DESIGNED THESE GREAT TOMBS TO FOCUS AND AMPLIFY THE ENERGIES OF THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE.
THIS SITH NECROPOLIS IS A PLACE THAT CAN HALT THE DECAY OF MY LAST CLONE BODY.


MY EMPEROR... YOU ARE RIGHT! THE DARK SIDE PERMEATES THE GLOOM OF THIS MAUSOLEUM!
YES, T'IAZ. THESE MUMMIFIED ANCIENTS ARE PRESERVED BY THE VERY ALCHEMY THAT MADE THEM OUTCASTS.
THEIR SPIRITS PRESS UPON ME... QUESTIONING MY TRESPASS!
EMPEROR OF NUMBERLESS WORLDS... LORD VADER'S THRONE STILL REMAINS EMPTY.
HAVE YOU NOW COME TO TAKE HIS PLACE AND JOIN US?
NO! NOT THAT...
...YOUR SPIRITS GUIDED ME BACK TO THIS LIFE WHEN I WAS DESTROYED BY VADER... AND BY HIS CHILDREN...
...MY AGING CLONE BODY WILL SOON DIE. I NEED HEALING... NOW.
THE DOOMED FLESH YOU WEAR HAS YIELDED TO NECROSIS. THIS CLONE BODY CANNOT BE SAVED.
COME... JOIN US... ENTER THE WORLD OF DARKNESS BEYOND ALL DYING!

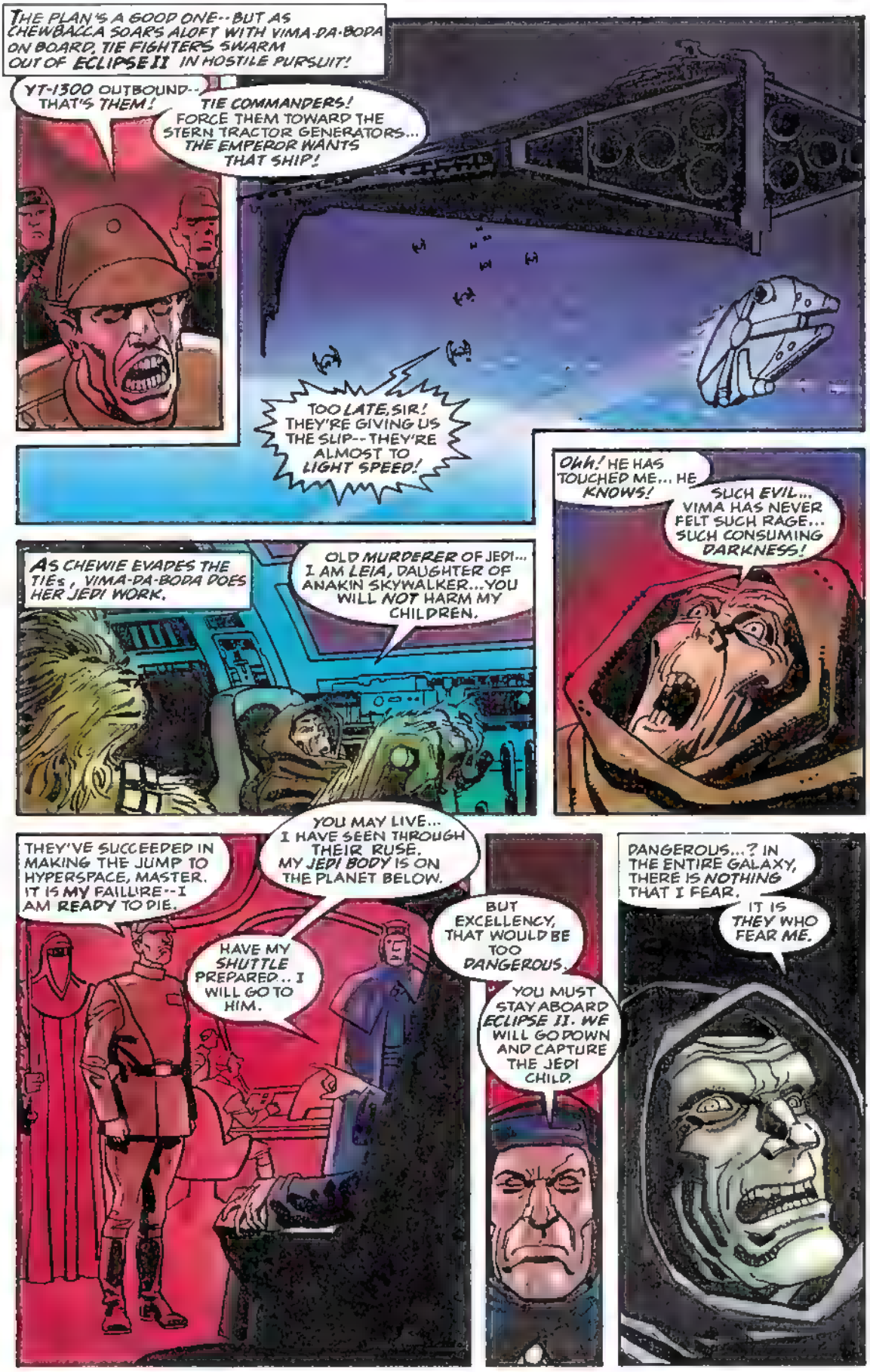

YOU DENY ME THIS? YOU ARE LONG DEAD... BUT IT IS I WHO RULE THE GALAXY... FOREVER!
IF YOU WILL NOT HEAL THIS CLONE, THEN HELP ME TO FIND THE JEDI CHILDREN--SO THAT I MAY LIVE!
I COMMAND YOU.
HOW CAN ONE WHO HAS RULED ONLY A FEW DECADES COMMAND THOSE WHO HELD DOMINION FOR CENTURIES?
VERY WELL, PALPATINE... GAZE INTO THE ORACLE STONE... SEE YOUR DARK HOPE...
...OR PERHAPS THIS CHILD SHALL BE YOUR BRIGHT BOOM.
HE LONG AGO GAVE UP EVERYTHING... TO THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE. I SAY LET HIM HAVE WHAT HE WANTS.
THE THIRD CHILD... YES... ABOARD A SHIP... NEAR THE ONDERON SYSTEM... SKYWALKER BLOOD FLOWS IN HIS VEINS!
BUT IF I TAKE HIS JEDI BODY AS MY OWN... I TOO WILL BECOME A MERE CHILD. AND WHO WILL CARE FOR ME UNTIL I AM GROWN?
WE WILL PROTECT YOU, EXCELLENCE...
...IF YOU INHABIT THE CHILD, WE VOW TO PRESERVE YOUR IMPERIAL RULE UNTIL YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO ASSUME THE THRONE.
YESS... OF COURSE... AND YOU EXPECT ME TO TRUST YOU? I TRUST NO ONE...
...AND YET, I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TRUST YOU!
VADER'S DESCENDANT BELONGS TO ME. LIKE HIS GRANDFATHER, HE WILL BE MINE. I WILL MAKE HIS FLESH MY OWN!
RETURN TO ECLIPSE II!

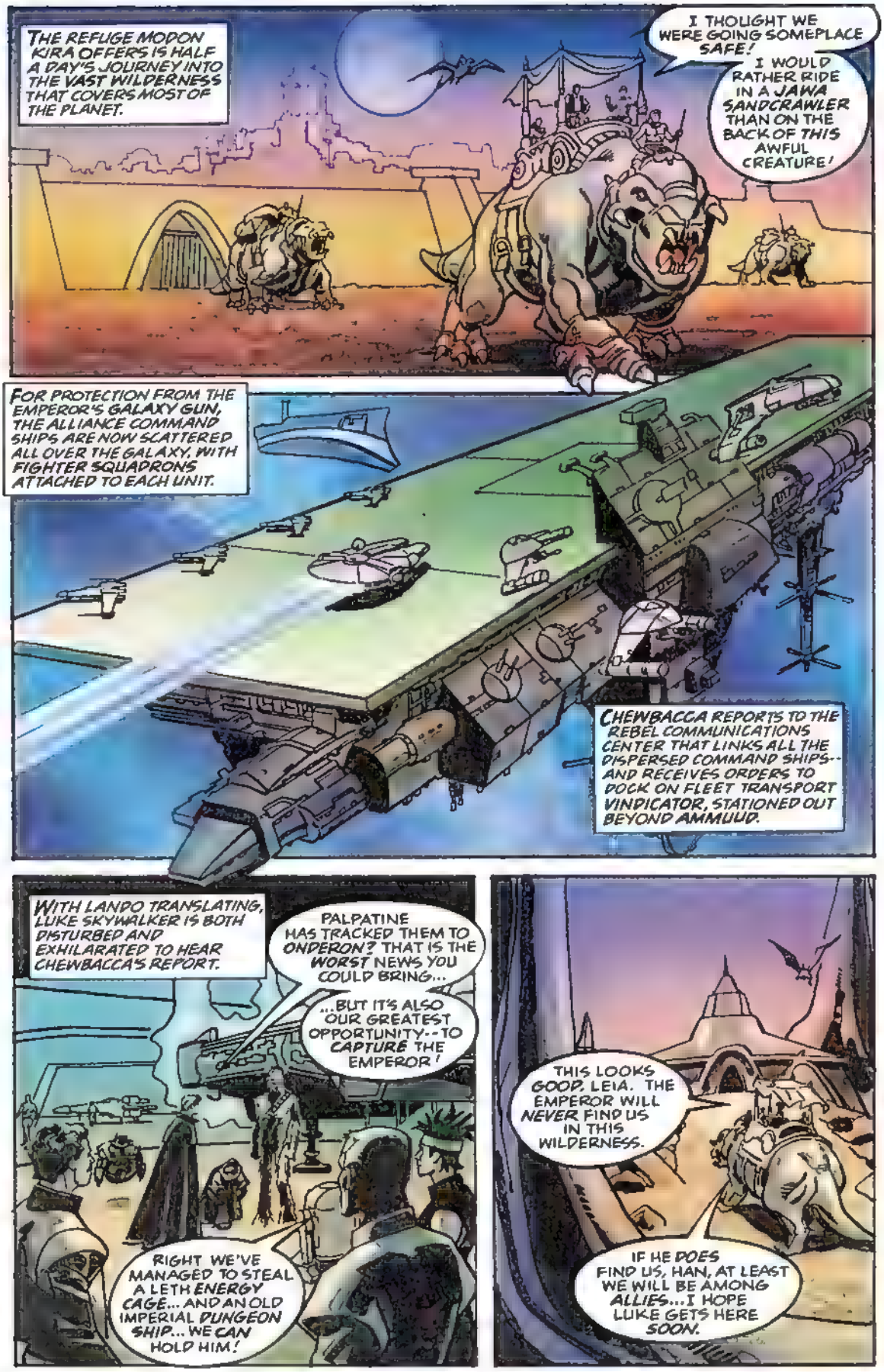

DEEP SPACE, NEAR THE ONDERON SYSTEM.
WE'LL REACH THE NEW SAFE WORLD SOON, LEIA. IT'S TIME TO PUT AWAY YOUR JEDI BOOKS.
IT'S WRITTEN IN CLASSICAL OSSAN. THREEPIO IS HELPING ME TRANSLATE IT... AND VIMA IS HELPING ME UNDERSTAND ITS MEANING.
THIS BOOK IS IMPORTANT, HAN. IT TEACHES JEDI BATTLE MEDITATION!
WITHOUT KNOWING IT, LEIA USED ELEMENTARY BATTLE MEDITATION WHEN SHE FACED THE EMPEROR ABOVE THE PINNACLE MOON.
THAT'S GREAT, BUT CAN'T IT WAIT? WE NEED TO SECURE THE KIDS FOR A ROUGH LANDING.
CHEWIE'S KICKING DOWN THE SUBLIGHTS RIGHT NOW--
I WISH ARTOO COULD HAVE COME... I JUST KNOW HE'LL END UP BLOWN TO PIECES IN ANOTHER SENSELESS BATTLE!
LEIA HAS NATURAL ABILITY, LIKE MY ANCESTRESS, VIMA SUNRIDER.
WAIT! THE EMPEROR... HE'S NEAR. I FEEL HIS DARK-SIDE POWER. HE WANTS US... HE WANTS ANAKIN.
YES... YOU MUST USE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TODAY, LEIA.
LEIA CONCENTRATES IN THE FORCE, USING THE IMAGING POWER OF JEDI BATTLE MEDITATION.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT'S HAPPENING?
HE SEES US, HAN... HIS EYE IS UPON OUR CHILD...
BUT THE ANCIENT JEDI KNEW HOW TO MEDITATE THE FIELD OF FORCE... WITH THEIR MINDS AND HEARTS.
ABOARD ECLIPSE II, EMPEROR PALPATINE EXPERIENCES A SUDDEN DISTURBANCE IN THE FORCE--
UNNH--
FIERCE JEDI... SHE'S IMPROVED HER COMMAND OF OLD JEDI TRICKS.
TAKE THEIR SHIP!

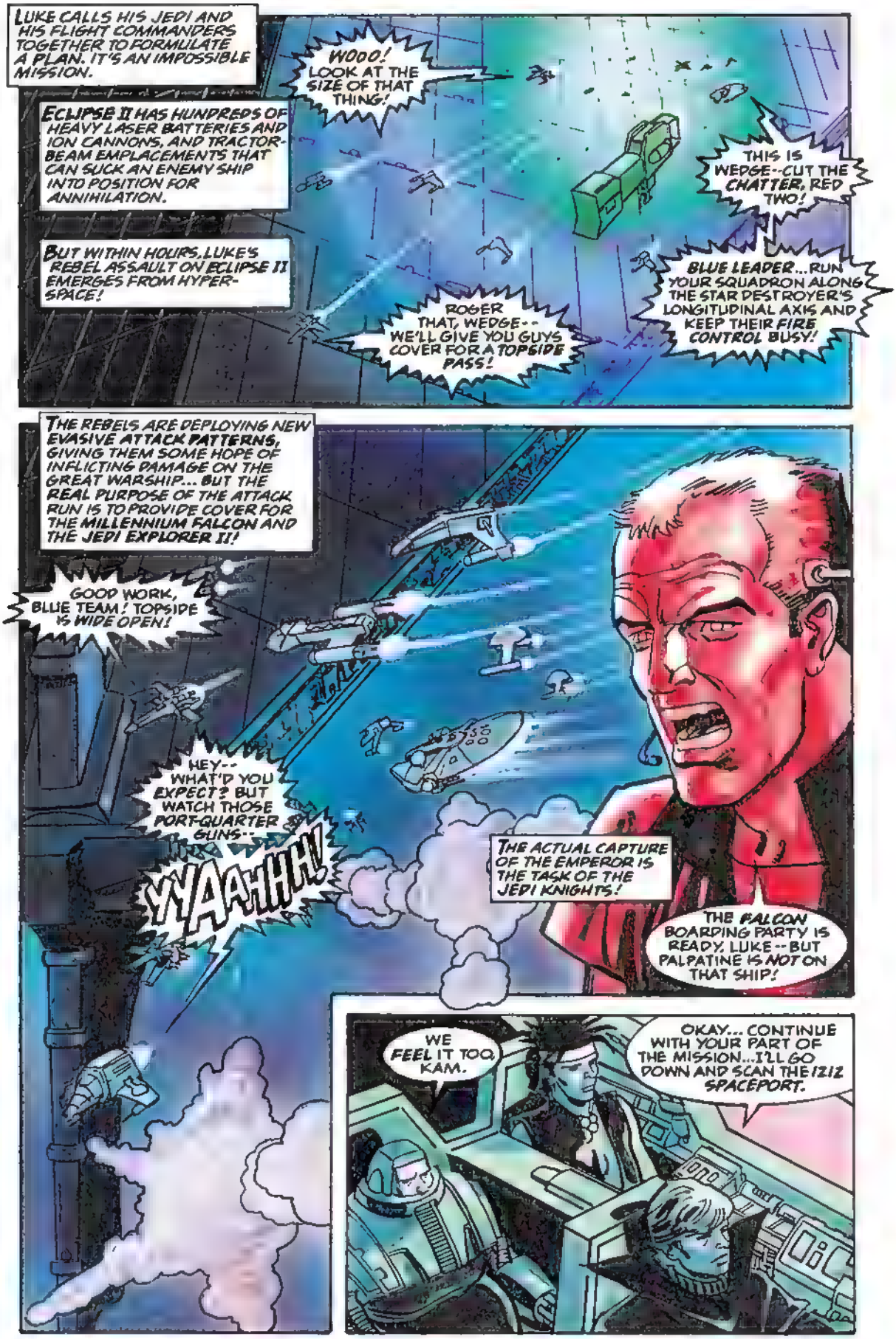

--READY ALL FORWARD AND STARBOARD TRACTOR BEAMS!
ENERGIZE AND PREPARE TO FIRE ION CANNONS!
FOLLOWING THE VISION IN THE SITH ORACLE STONE, PALPATINE'S FLAGSHIP ECLIPSE II HAS CROSSED HYPERSPACE TO THE ONDERON SYSTEM!
WHERE'D THAT COME FROM? CHEWIE! PULL US OUT OF HERE!
HNNRAWWN!
RIGHT... TRACTOR BEAM. I FELT IT GRAB--
OKAY... TIME TO TRY OUT YOUR NEW PLAN, CHEWIE!
BOOST THE ACCELERATION AND ARM THE ARAKYDS! I'M TAKIN' THE HELM.


RIDING ON THE IMPERIAL TRACTOR BEAM, HAN AND CHEWBACCA UNLEASH TWIN ARAKYD MISSILES--
GHNNRR!
DIRECT HIT!
SHIELDS UP! THEY'RE GOING TO RETURN FIRE!
AS THE POWERFUL MISSILES DESTROY THE BEAM GENERATOR, THE FALCON IS RELEASED FROM ITS IRON GRIP!
YEEHAW! IT WORKED!
HAN, GET US AWAY FROM THE EMPEROR... AS FAR AS YOU CAN.
WE'VE GOT TO RETURN TO HYPERSPACE!
NUTHIN' I'D LIKE BETTER, PRINCESS... BUT THE FALCON TOOK A HIT. HYPERDRIVE IS PHASING BADLY.
WE'VE GOT TO STAY ON OUR ORIGINAL COURSE... AND HOPE THE FALCON HOLDS TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE IT!
YOU'VE LOST THEM? MUST I DO EVERYTHING MYSELF?
MY EMPEROR... I HAVE FAILED YOU--
AAIIEEE!

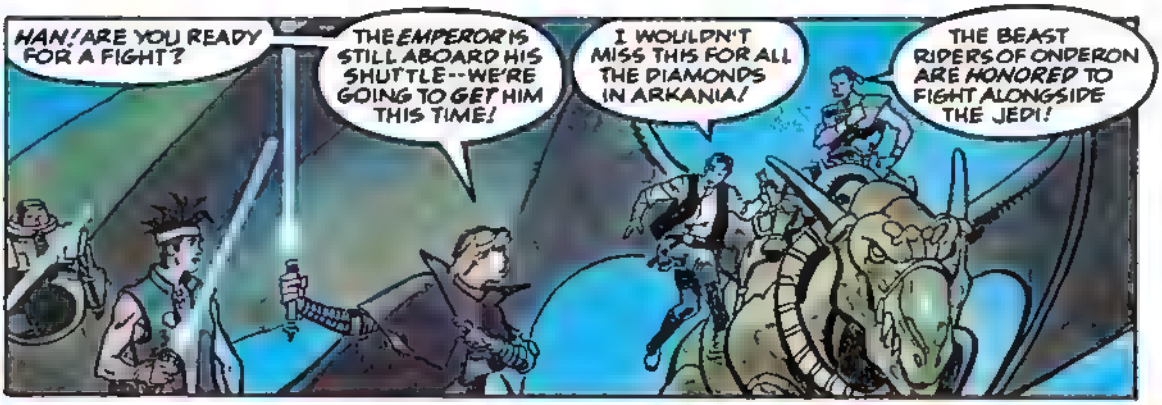
ONDERON. THE GREAT WALLED CITY OF IZIZ.
THE MILLENNIUM FALCON IS IN PORT FOR REPAIRS... IT LOOKS AS IF SHE WON'T BE STAYING LONG.
I HEAR YA, CHEWIE... THE EMPEROR'S DESTROYER HAS MOVED INTO DOCKING ORBIT.
WE'LL HAVE A HECK OF A TIME GETTING PAST THEIR SCANNERS.
HNNRRARR.
SHIP'S READY, LEIA... BUT HAVE YOU CHECKED WHAT'S FLOATING IN FRONT OF THE DXUN MOON?
YES...THE CITY IS NOT SAFE. THESE MEN WANT TO HIDE US... THEY HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF HELPING THE JEDI.
I AM MODON KIRA. MY ANCESTORS HAVE FOUGHT BESIDE THE JEDI SINCE THE TIME WHEN MASTER ARCA SAVED OUR PEOPLE.
NO ONE ON ONDERON CARES FOR THE EMPEROR AND HIS DARK-SIDE WAYS.
THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA... CHEWIE CAN TAKE THE FALCON AND TRY TO FAKE 'EM OUT.
IF HE JUMPS TO HYPERSPACE BEFORE THE EMPEROR CAN SENSE YOU'RE NOT ABOARD, WE'LL BE SAFE.
DON'T KID YOURSELF, HAN. AT MOST, WE WILL BUY SOME TIME.
HNREF.
VIMA WILL GO WITH WOOKIEE. VIMA WILL MEDITATE IN THE FORCE... MAKE THE EMPEROR THINK ALL THE JEDI ARE ESCAPING.

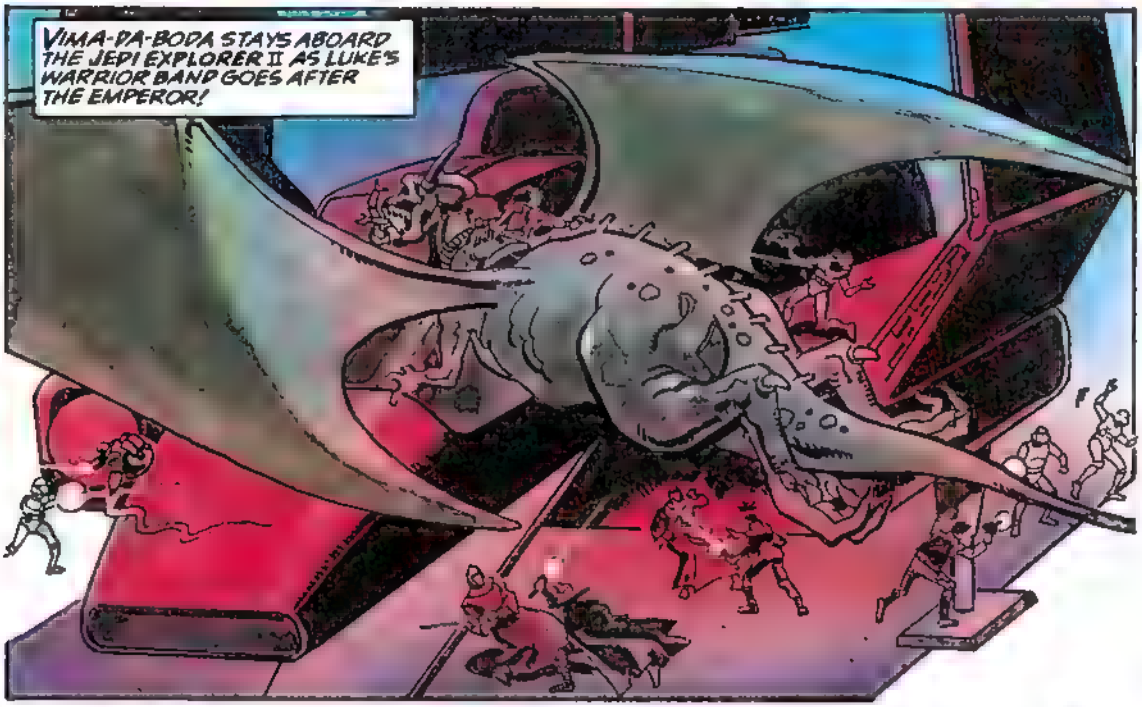

THE PLAN'S A GOOD ONE--BUT AS CHEWBACCA SOARS ALOFT WITH VIMA-DA-BODA ON BOARD, TIE FIGHTERS SWARM OUT OF ECLIPSE II IN HOSTILE PURSUIT!
YT-1300 OUTBOUND--THAT'S THEM!
TIE COMMANDERS! FORCE THEM TOWARD THE STERN TRACTOR GENERATORS... THE EMPEROR WANTS THAT SHIP!
TOO LATE, SIR! THEY'RE GIVING US THE SLIP--THEY'RE ALMOST TO LIGHT SPEED!
OHH! HE HAS TOUCHED ME... HE KNOWS!
SUCH EVIL... VIMA HAS NEVER FELT SUCH RAGE... SUCH CONSUMING DARKNESS!
AS CHEWIE EVADES THE TIEs, VIMA-DA-BODA DOES HER JEDI WORK.
OLD MURDERER OF JEDI... I AM LEIA, DAUGHTER OF ANAKIN SKYWALKER...YOU WILL NOT HARM MY CHILDREN.
THEY'VE SUCCEEDED IN MAKING THE JUMP TO HYPERSPACE, MASTER. IT IS MY FAILURE--I AM READY TO DIE.
YOU MAY LIVE... I HAVE SEEN THROUGH THEIR RUSE. MY JEDI BODY IS ON THE PLANET BELOW.
HAVE MY SHUTTLE PREPARED.. I WILL GO TO HIM.
BUT EXCELLENCY, THAT WOULD BE TOO DANGEROUS.
YOU MUST STAY ABOARD ECLIPSE II. WE WILL GO DOWN AND CAPTURE THE JEDI CHILD.
DANGEROUS...? IN THE ENTIRE GALAXY, THERE IS NOTHING THAT I FEAR.
IT IS THEY WHO FEAR ME.

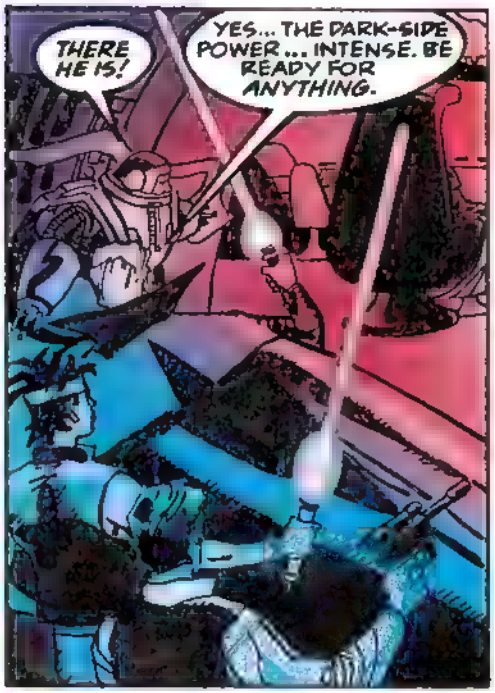

THE REFUGE MODON KIRA OFFERS IS HALF A DAY'S JOURNEY INTO THE VAST WILDERNESS THAT COVERS MOST OF THE PLANET.
I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING SOMEPLACE SAFE!
I WOULD RATHER RIDE IN A JAWA SANDCRAWLER THAN ON THE BACK OF THIS AWFUL CREATURE!
FOR PROTECTION FROM THE EMPEROR'S GALAXY GUN, THE ALLIANCE COMMAND SHIPS ARE NOW SCATTERED ALL OVER THE GALAXY, WITH FIGHTER SQUADRONS ATTACHED TO EACH UNIT.
CHEWBACCA REPORTS TO THE REBEL COMMUNICATIONS CENTER THAT LINKS ALL THE DISPERSED COMMAND SHIPS--AND RECEIVES ORDERS TO DOCK ON FLEET TRANSPORT VINDICATOR, STATIONED OUT BEYOND AMMUUD.
WITH LANDO TRANSLATING, LUKE SKYWALKER IS BOTH DISTURBED AND EXHILARATED TO HEAR CHEWBACCA'S REPORT.
PALPATINE HAS TRACKED THEM TO ONDERON? THAT IS THE WORST NEWS YOU COULD BRING...
...BUT IT'S ALSO OUR GREATEST OPPORTUNITY--TO CAPTURE THE EMPEROR!
RIGHT. WE'VE MANAGED TO STEAL A LETH ENERGY CAGE... AND AN OLD IMPERIAL DUNGEON SHIP... WE CAN HOLD HIM!
THIS LOOKS GOOD, LEIA. THE EMPEROR WILL NEVER FIND US IN THIS WILDERNESS.
IF HE DOES FIND US, HAN, AT LEAST WE WILL BE AMONG ALLIES... I HOPE LUKE GETS HERE SOON.


LUKE CALLS HIS JEDI AND HIS FLIGHT COMMANDERS TOGETHER TO FORMULATE A PLAN. IT'S AN IMPOSSIBLE MISSION.
ECLIPSE II HAS HUNDREDS OF HEAVY LASER BATTERIES AND ION CANNONS, AND TRACTOR-BEAM EMPLACEMENTS THAT CAN SUCK AN ENEMY SHIP INTO POSITION FOR ANNIHILATION.
BUT WITHIN HOURS, LUKE'S REBEL ASSAULT ON ECLIPSE II EMERGES FROM HYPER-SPACE!
WOOO! LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT THING!
THIS IS WEDGE--CUT THE CHATTER, RED TWO!
BLUE LEADER... RUN YOUR SQUADRON ALONG THE STAR DESTROYER'S LONGITUDINAL AXIS AND KEEP THEIR FIRE CONTROL BUSY!
ROGER THAT, WEDGE-- WE'LL GIVE YOU GUYS COVER FOR A TOPSIDE PASS!
THE REBELS ARE DEPLOYING NEW EVASIVE ATTACK PATTERNS, GIVING THEM SOME HOPE OF INFLICTING DAMAGE ON THE GREAT WARSHIP... BUT THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE ATTACK RUN IS TO PROVIDE COVER FOR THE MILLENNIUM FALCON AND THE JEDI EXPLORER II!
GOOD WORK, BLUE TEAM! TOPSIDE IS WIDE OPEN!
HEY-- WHAT'D YOU EXPECT? BUT WATCH THOSE PORT-QUARTER GUNS--
YYAAHHH!
THE ACTUAL CAPTURE OF THE EMPEROR IS THE TASK OF THE JEDI KNIGHTS!
THE FALCON BOARDING PARTY IS READY, LUKE-- BUT PALPATINE IS NOT ON THAT SHIP!
WE FEEL IT TOO, KAM.
OKAY... CONTINUE WITH YOUR PART OF THE MISSION... I'LL GO DOWN AND SCAN THE IZIZ SPACEPORT.

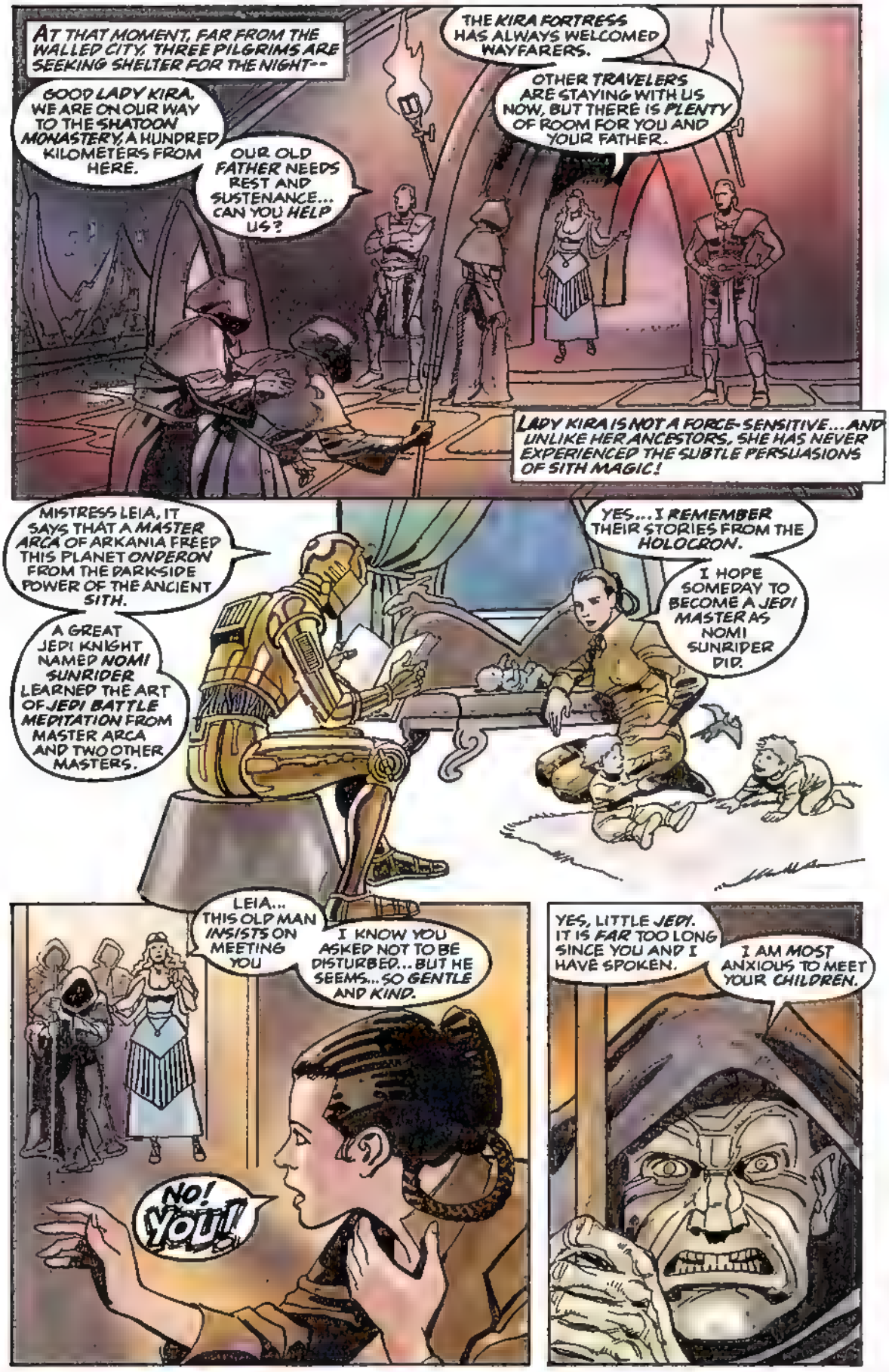
CAPTAIN...A SMALL REBEL CRUISER BROKE FORMATION AND DROPPED TOWARD THE SURFACE...
IT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS SKYWALKER'S SHIP.
SIR, THE OTHER REBEL SHIPS ARE REGROUPING JUST OUT OF RANGE OF OUR TURBOLASERS...THEY ARE PREPARING ANOTHER ATTACK RUN!
NOTIFY THE EMPEROR ABOUT THE CRUISER...AND LAUNCH THE SHADOW DROIDS AGAINST THE REBEL FLEET...
...THE EMPEROR WILL BE VERY DISPLEASED IF HE LOSES ANOTHER FLAGSHIP!
HIDDEN BEHIND THE SUPERSTRUCTURE OF THE EMPEROR'S MASSIVE FLAGSHIP, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON BEGINS CUTTING AN UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS PORT TO THE ENGINEERING SECTION--
OKAY. STRAP ON YOUR BOARDING GEAR...WEDGE, LOCK THOSE EXTENDER CABLES ON ARTOO. HE'LL STAY ON THE FALCON.
BRT WHEE TWRPDRRRDET!
ISN'T THIS THE SAME TRICK WE USED AGAINST THE WORLD DEVASTATORS!
HEY--IF IT WORKS, WHY MESS WITH IT?
FIRE FLASHES OF THE REBEL ASSAULT ARE CLEARLY VISIBLE ON THE SURFACE--
REBEL SHIPS! X-WINGS AND E-WINGS... THEY'RE HITTING THE EMPEROR'S FLAGSHIP.
UH-OH. THERE'S THE JEDI EXPLORER II... LUKE'S COMING IN WIDE, HEADING FOR THE SPACEPORT.
I'D BETTER GET OUT THERE TO MEET HIM.
SOLO AND KIRA MAKE THE RETURN JOURNEY TO THE IZIZ SPACEPORT ABOARD MODON'S FAVORITE FLYING BEAST!
THE EMPEROR'S HERE, BRAND...CAN YOU FEEL HIS PRESENCE?
YEAH... HE'S ON THAT IMPERIAL SHUTTLE.
HEY...HERE COMES HAN SOLO... ON A GIANT BIRD!

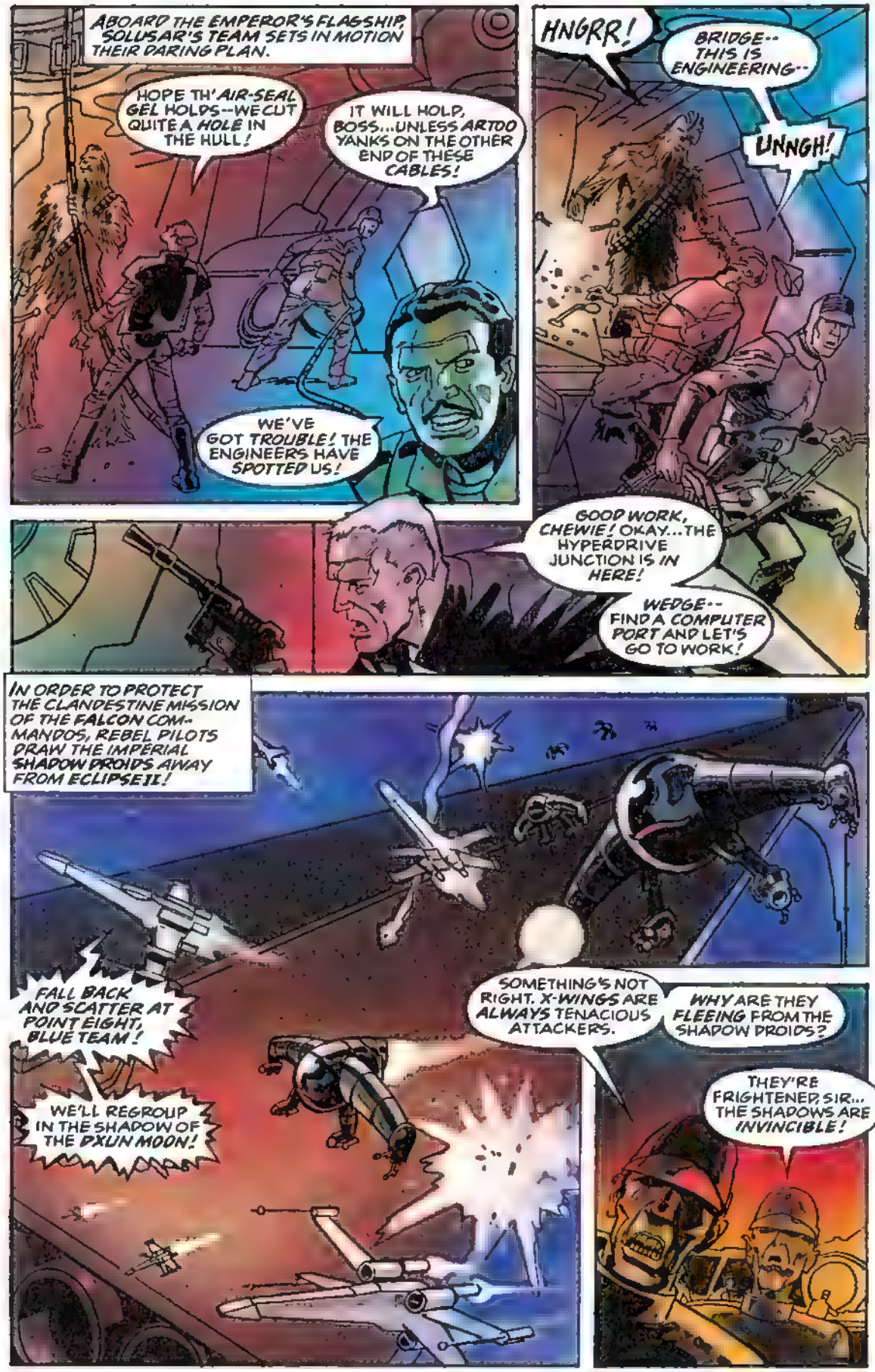

HAN! ARE YOU READY FOR A FIGHT?
THE EMPEROR IS STILL ABOARD HIS SHUTTLE--WE'RE GOING TO GET HIM THIS TIME!
I WOULDN'T MISS THIS FOR ALL THE DIAMONDS IN ARKANIA!
THE BEAST RIDERS OF ONDERON ARE HONORED TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE JEDI!


VIMA-DA-BODA STAYS ABOARD THE JEDI EXPLORER II AS LUKE'S WARRIOR BAND GOES AFTER THE EMPEROR!


THERE HE IS!
YES... THE DARK-SIDE POWER ... INTENSE. BE READY FOR ANYTHING.

Aha! JEDI KNIGHTS! ARE YOU LOOKING FOR PALPATINE?
POOR, STUPID SKYWALKER! PALPATINE IS NOT HERE... HE'S GONE TO MEET HIS JEDI HEIR!
NO!
THE FORTRESS... HE'S GONE TO THE FORTRESS!


AT THAT MOMENT, FAR FROM THE WALLED CITY, THREE PILGRIMS ARE SEEKING SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT--
GOOD LADY KIRA, WE ARE ON OUR WAY TO THE SHATOON MONASTERY, A HUNDRED KILOMETERS FROM HERE.
OUR OLD FATHER NEEDS REST AND SUSTENANCE... CAN YOU HELP US?
THE KIRA FORTRESS HAS ALWAYS WELCOMED WAYFARERS.
OTHER TRAVELERS ARE STAYING WITH US NOW, BUT THERE IS PLENTY OF ROOM FOR YOU AND YOUR FATHER.
LADY KIRA IS NOT A FORCE-SENSITIVE... AND UNLIKE HER ANCESTORS, SHE HAS NEVER EXPERIENCED THE SUBTLE PERSUASIONS OF SITH MAGIC!
MISTRESS LEIA, IT SAYS THAT A MASTER ARCA OF ARKANIA FREED THIS PLANET ONDERON FROM THE DARK-SIDE POWER OF THE ANCIENT SITH.
A GREAT JEDI KNIGHT NAMED NOMI SUNRIDER LEARNED THE ART OF JEDI BATTLE MEDITATION FROM MASTER ARCA AND TWO OTHER MASTERS.
YES... I REMEMBER THEIR STORIES FROM THE HOLOCRON.
I HOPE SOMEDAY TO BECOME A JEDI MASTER AS NOMI SUNRIDER DID.
LEIA... THIS OLD MAN INSISTS ON MEETING YOU
I KNOW YOU ASKED NOT TO BE DISTURBED... BUT HE SEEMS... SO GENTLE AND KIND.
NO! YOU!
YES, LITTLE JEDI. IT IS FAR TOO LONG SINCE YOU AND I HAVE SPOKEN.
I AM MOST ANXIOUS TO MEET YOUR CHILDREN.


ABOARD THE EMPEROR'S FLAGSHIP, SOLUSAR'S TEAM SETS IN MOTION THEIR DARING PLAN.
HOPE TH' AIR-SEAL GEL HOLDS--WE CUT QUITE A HOLE IN THE HULL!
IT WILL HOLD, BOSS...UNLESS ARTOO YANKS ON THE OTHER END OF THESE CABLES!
WE'VE GOT TROUBLE! THE ENGINEERS HAVE SPOTTED US!
HNGRR!
BRIDGE-- THIS IS ENGINEERING--
UNNGH!
GOOD WORK, CHEWIE! OKAY...THE HYPERDRIVE JUNCTION IS IN HERE!
WEDGE-- FIND A COMPUTER PORT AND LET'S GO TO WORK!
IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE CLANDESTINE MISSION OF THE FALCON COMMANDOS, REBEL PILOTS DRAW THE IMPERIAL SHADOW DROIDS AWAY FROM ECLIPSE II!
FALL BACK AND SCATTER AT POINT EIGHT, BLUE TEAM!
WE'LL REGROUP IN THE SHADOW OF THE PXUN MOON!
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT. X-WINGS ARE ALWAYS TENACIOUS ATTACKERS.
WHY ARE THEY FLEEING FROM THE SHADOW DROIDS?
THEY'RE FRIGHTENED, SIR... THE SHADOWS ARE INVINCIBLE!

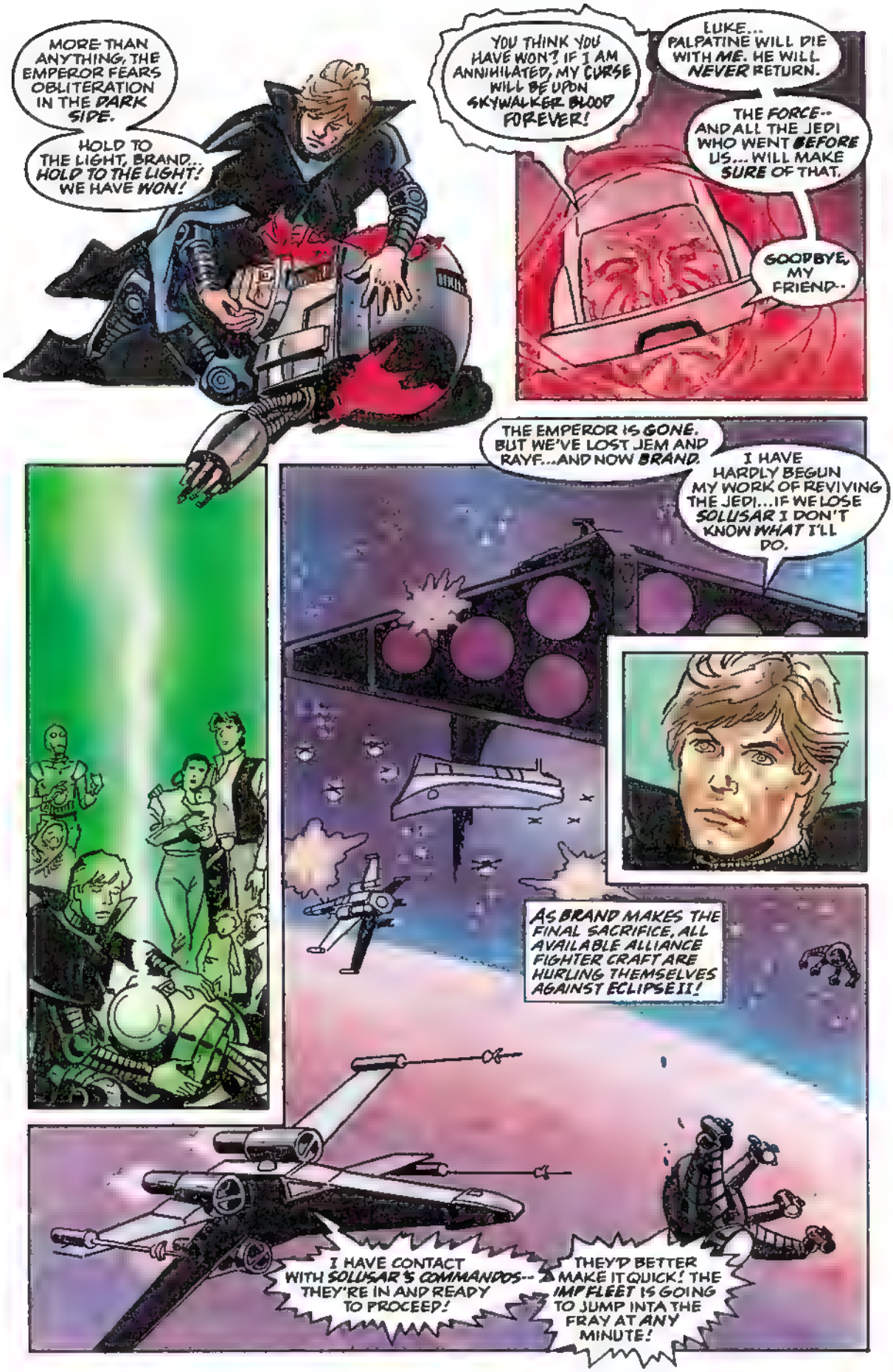
ON THE PLANET BELOW, ANOTHER REBEL FINDS HERSELF FACE TO FACE WITH THE MALIGNANT HEART OF THE EMPIRE.
CHILDREN... GET BEHIND MAMA!
THREEPIO! TAKE ANAKIN!
Unnk-- CURSE YOU, JEDI!
MASTER!
CHILDREN! THIS WAY! HURRY!
Oh, DEAR--MY CIRCUITS!
JEDI WOMAN-- YOUR STRENGTH IS IMPRESSIVE...AGAINST MY INFERIOR CLONE!
BUT THE POWER OF THE DARK SIDE IS NOT DEPENDENT ON MERE FLESH.
EXCELLENCE... PLEASE!
YOU ARE KILLING YOURSELF!
YESS... I WILL DIE--
--BUT THE FUTURE OF MY EMPIRE WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED!
WAAAAAA!

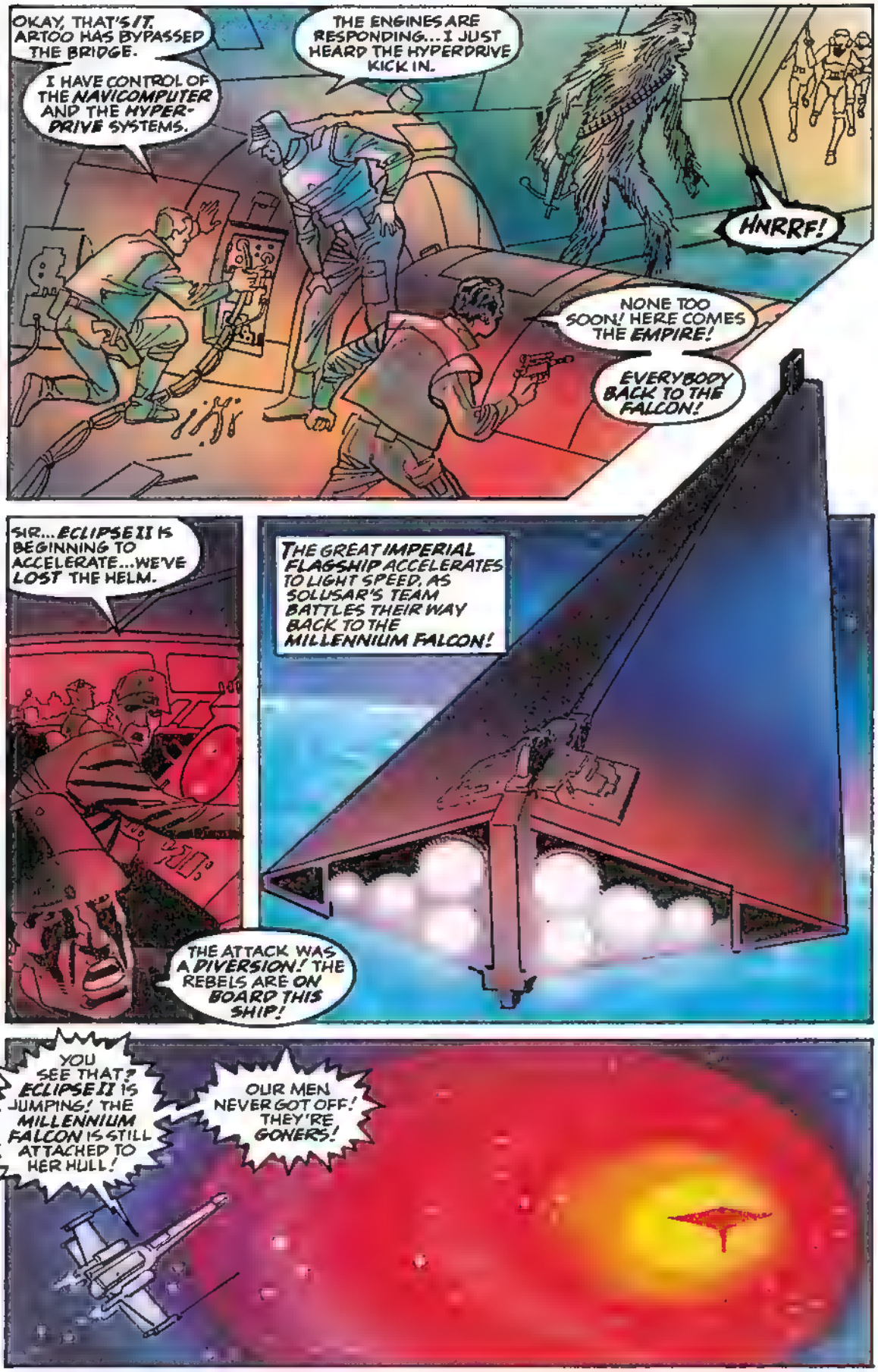
GIVE ME THE CHILD!
EVIL OLD MAN! HOW DARE YOU DEFILE THE HOUSE OF KIRA?
KRYX... ktik zkrzz... tik
THEY'RE IN HERE, LUKE!
FOLLOWING MOPON'S DIRECTIONS, THE JEDI EXPLORER II HAS MADE A FAST TRIP ACROSS THE ONDERON WILDERNESS.
I KNOW THIS JEDI!
HE IS ONE OF THE FEW WHO ESCAPED THE EXTERMINATION!
HOW CONSIDERATE OF YOU TO RETURN FROM EXILE... SO I CAN COMPLETE MY WORK!
I'M OKAY, RAYF... I'LL MAKE IT.
TAKE HIM!
CAN THIS FRAGILE OLD SORCERER REALLY RULE A GALAXY?
NTHA! THIS WILL BE EASY!
MASTER... LET T'IAZ DEAL WITH THIS UNCIVILIZED YOUTH!
SORRY, T'IAZ... I'M NOT READY TO JOIN MY UNCIVILIZED SISTER--YET!
ZZZRRRMMNN
NYAAAK!

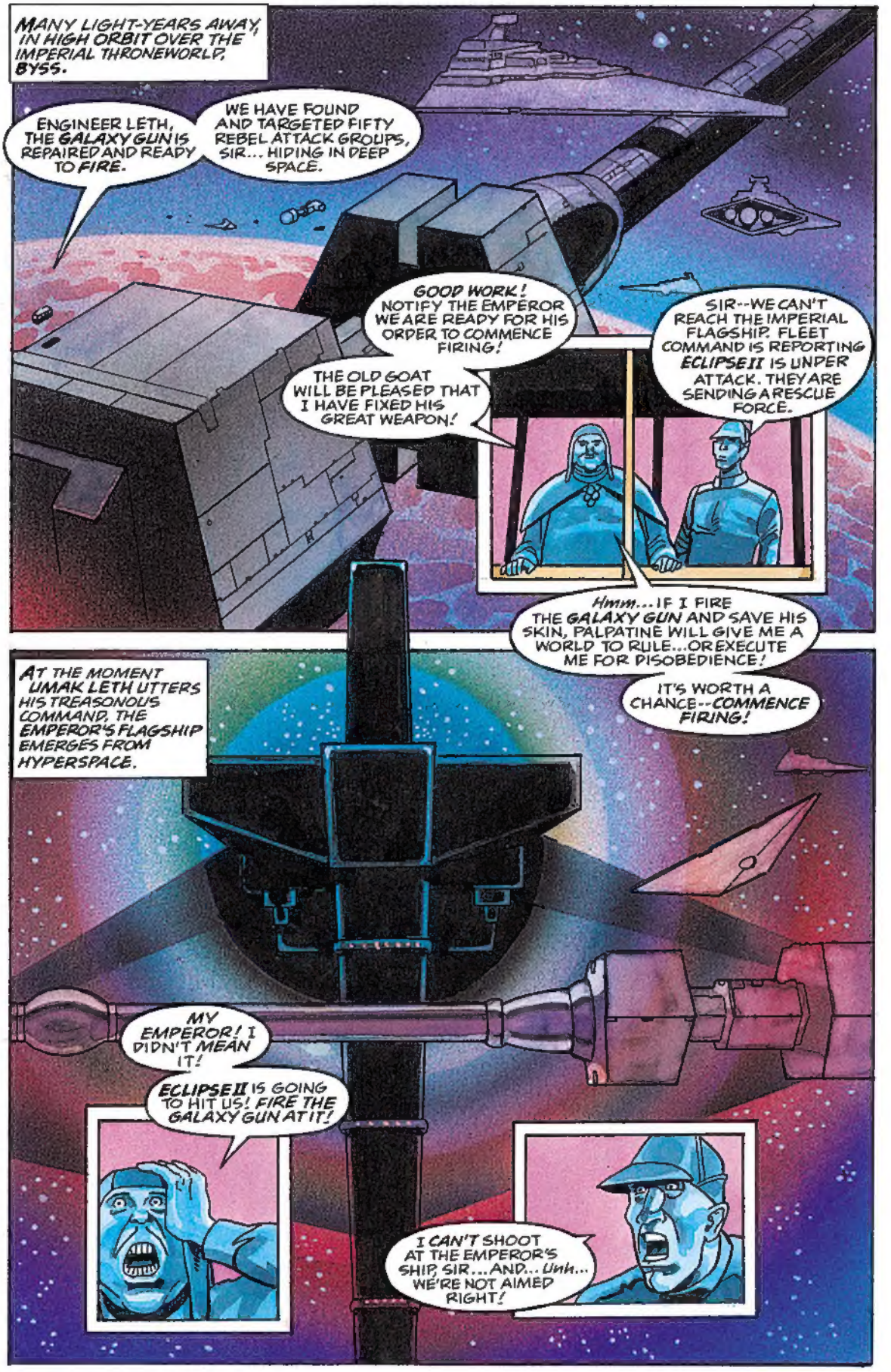
RUTHLESS BOY--WILL YOU KILL A "FRAGILE OLD SORCERER" IN ANGER?
LUKE TOLD ME ABOUT YOU!
I AM A JEDI! I HAVE VOWED TO DEFEND THOSE YOU SEEK TO DESTROY WITH YOUR ANGER!
VERY WELL, SO-CALLED JEDI...
DEFEND YOURSELF!
YAAAHHH!
POOR FOOL... I SAW MANY DIE WITH THAT JEDI FIRE IN THEIR EYES... IN THE DAYS WHEN WE DEFEATED THEM ALL.
MASTER...I BEG YOU! RELENT BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!
LUKE!
THE EMPEROR IS WEAKENED! HE'S ALL YOURS!
LOOK! HERE'S MY DARK APPRENTICE! YOU HAVE GONE A LONG WAY TOWARD THE DARK SIDE, SKYWALKER...MORE THAN YOU EVEN KNOW!
THE BATTLE HAS DRAINED ME...YOU CAN KILL ME EASILY NOW... AND RULE THE EMPIRE...
...JUST AS YOU AND YOUR TRAITOROUS FATHER INTENDED!
WITHOUT NEW CLONES, DEATH IS NO LONGER AN ESCAPE FOR YOU, PALPATINE.
IN THE NAME OF THE NEW REPUBLIC, I ACCEPT YOUR SURRENDER!

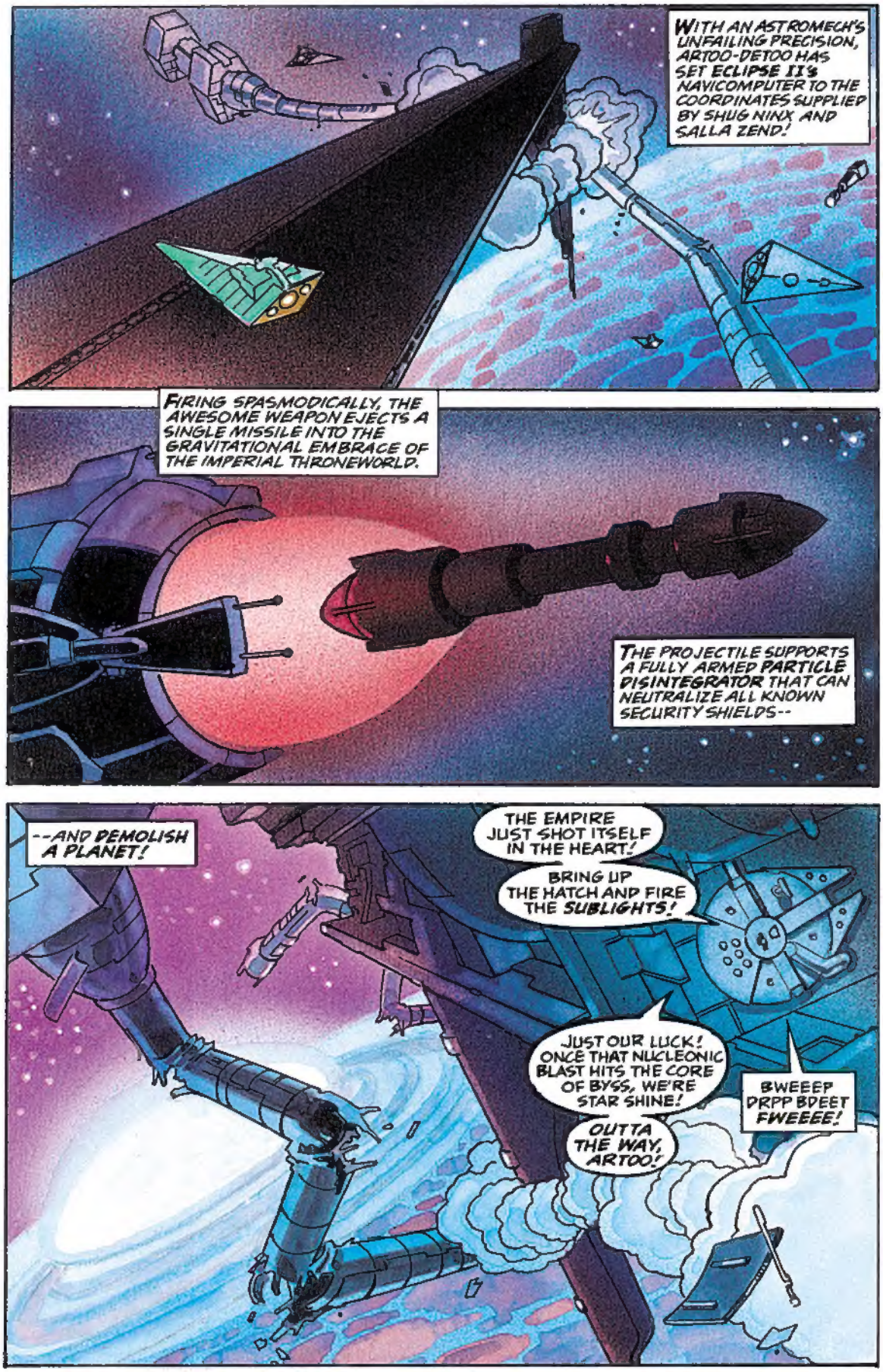
SURRENDER? I THINK NOT.
SKYWALKER BLOOD RUNS DARK WITH THE FORCE.
I HAVE CHOSEN THIS CHILD... TO INHERIT THE RULE OF THE GALAXY!
OVER MY DEAD BODY!
NO...OVER PALPATINE'S DEAD BODY!
HAN-- WAIT!
GOT HIM!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, LUKE? DON'T YOU THINK THE TIME FOR JEDI BATTLE ETIQUETTE IS OVER?
Unnh... THE CORELLIAN HAS KILLED ME...I FEEL IT... I AM DONE...
...IT IS TIME... TO ENTER THE CHILD... AS I PROMISED--

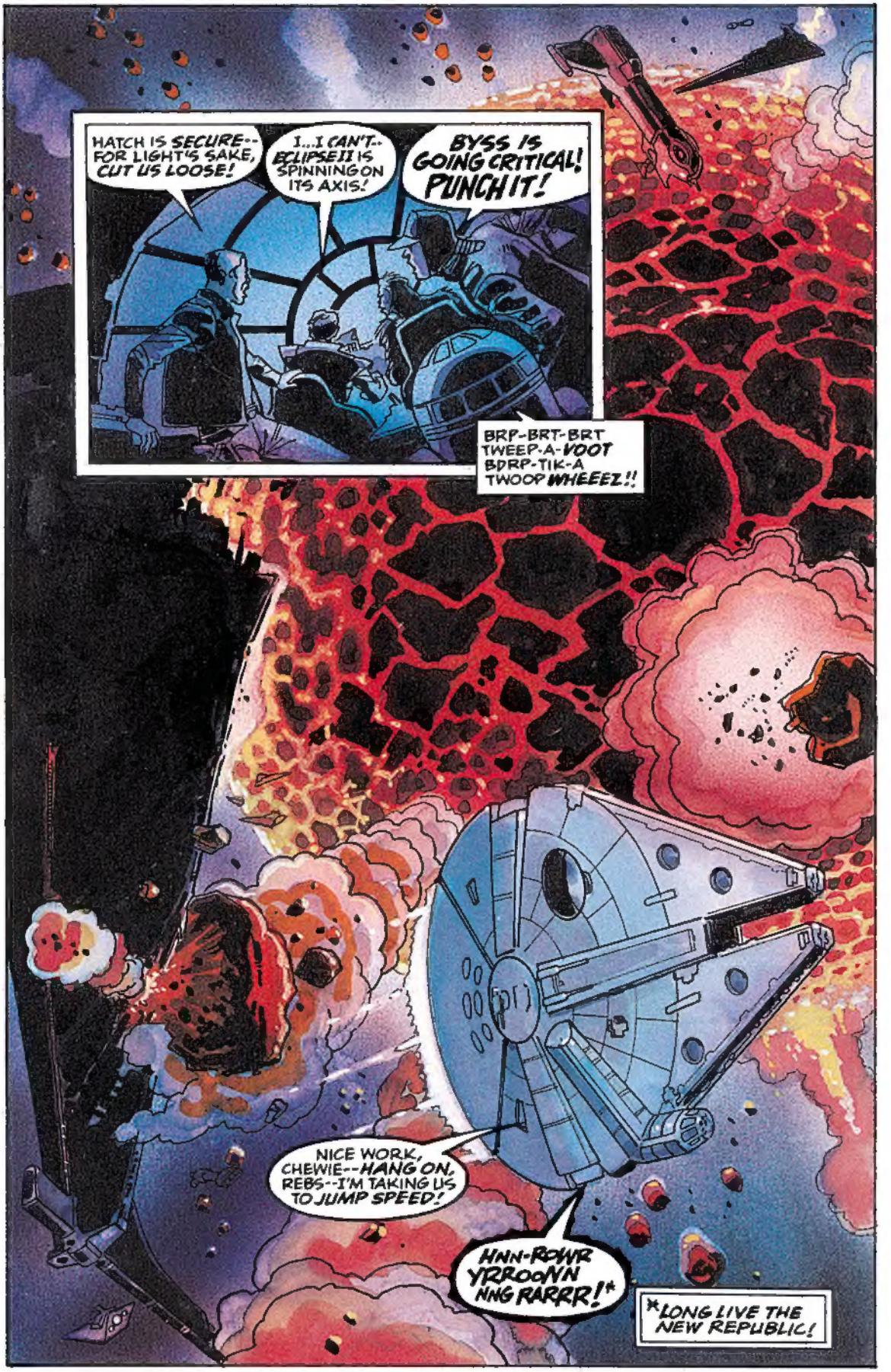
--WHO WILL YOU KILL NOW, HAN SOLO? YOUR OWN SON?
UNNOTICED, THE DISABLED KING OF GANATH REGAINS MENTAL CONTROL OF HIS PROSTHETIC REPULSORS--
--AND LUNGES OUT FOR HAN AND LEIA'S CHILD!
BRAND IS TRYING TO SHIELD ANAKIN FROM THE EMPEROR WITH THE LIGHT SIDE OF THE FORCE!
BUT LEIA SENSES THAT THE DISEMBODIED SPIRIT OF THE EMPEROR IS ABOUT TO ENTER THE TINY BODY.
NOOO!
GIVE ME ANAKIN... NOW!
MY CHILD!
THE EMPEROR... DID HE--?
I HAVE THE EMPEROR. HE IS IN ME.
I AM HOLDING HIM. HIS SPIRIT IS MY PRISONER.
HE IS NOT AT ALL AS HE SEEMED... THERE IS TREMENDOUS RAGE IN HIM...YES...BUT ALSO BOUNDLESS DESPAIR.
I AM BEING EATEN ALIVE BY DARKNESS!


MORE THAN ANYTHING, THE EMPEROR FEARS OBLITERATION IN THE DARK SIDE.
HOLD TO THE LIGHT, BRAND... HOLD TO THE LIGHT! WE HAVE WON!
YOU THINK YOU HAVE WON? IF I AM ANNIHILATED, MY CURSE WILL BE UPON SKYWALKER BLOOD FOREVER!
LUKE... PALPATINE WILL DIE WITH ME. HE WILL NEVER RETURN.
THE FORCE-- AND ALL THE JEDI WHO WENT BEFORE US... WILL MAKE SURE OF THAT.
GOODBYE, MY FRIEND--
THE EMPEROR IS GONE. BUT WE'VE LOST JEM AND RAYF...AND NOW BRAND.
I HAVE HARDLY BEGUN MY WORK OF REVIVING THE JEDI...IF WE LOSE SOLUSAR I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL DO.
AS BRAND MAKES THE FINAL SACRIFICE, ALL AVAILABLE ALLIANCE FIGHTER CRAFT ARE HURLING THEMSELVES AGAINST ECLIPSE II!
I HAVE CONTACT WITH SOLUSAR'S COMMANDOS-- THEY'RE IN AND READY TO PROCEED!
THEY'D BETTER MAKE IT QUICK! THE IMP FLEET IS GOING TO JUMP INTA THE FRAY AT ANY MINUTE!


OKAY, THAT'S IT. ARTOO HAS BYPASSED THE BRIDGE.
I HAVE CONTROL OF THE NAVICOMPUTER AND THE HYPERDRIVE SYSTEMS.
THE ENGINES ARE RESPONDING... I JUST HEARD THE HYPERDRIVE KICK IN.
HNRRF!
NONE TOO SOON! HERE COMES THE EMPIRE!
EVERYBODY BACK TO THE FALCON!
SIR... ECLIPSE II IS BEGINNING TO ACCELERATE... WE'VE LOST THE HELM.
THE GREAT IMPERIAL FLAGSHIP ACCELERATES TO LIGHT SPEED, AS SOLUSAR'S TEAM BATTLES THEIR WAY BACK TO THE MILLENNIUM FALCON!
THE ATTACK WAS A DIVERSION! THE REBELS ARE ON BOARD THIS SHIP!
YOU SEE THAT? ECLIPSE II IS JUMPING! THE MILLENNIUM FALCON IS STILL ATTACHED TO HER HULL!
OUR MEN NEVER GOT OFF! THEY'RE GONERS!


MANY LIGHT-YEARS AWAY, IN HIGH ORBIT OVER THE IMPERIAL THRONEWORLD, BYSS.
ENGINEER LETH, THE GALAXY GUN IS REPAIRED AND READY TO FIRE.
WE HAVE FOUND AND TARGETED FIFTY REBEL ATTACK GROUPS, SIR... HIDING IN DEEP SPACE.
GOOD WORK! NOTIFY THE EMPEROR WE ARE READY FOR HIS ORDER TO COMMENCE FIRING!
THE OLD GOAT WILL BE PLEASED THAT I HAVE FIXED HIS GREAT WEAPON!
SIR--WE CAN'T REACH THE IMPERIAL FLAGSHIP. FLEET COMMAND IS REPORTING ECLIPSE II IS UNDER ATTACK. THEY ARE SENDING A RESCUE FORCE.
Hmm... IF I FIRE THE GALAXY GUN AND SAVE HIS SKIN, PALPATINE WILL GIVE ME A WORLD TO RULE...OR EXECUTE ME FOR DISOBEDIENCE!
IT'S WORTH A CHANCE--COMMENCE FIRING!
AT THE MOMENT UMAK LETH UTTERS HIS TREASONOUS COMMAND, THE EMPEROR'S FLAGSHIP EMERGES FROM HYPERSPACE.
MY EMPEROR! I DIDN'T MEAN IT!
ECLIPSE II IS GOING TO HIT US! FIRE THE GALAXY GUN AT IT!
I CAN'T SHOOT AT THE EMPEROR'S SHIP, SIR... AND... Unh... WE'RE NOT AIMED RIGHT!


WITH AN ASTROMECH'S UNFAILING PRECISION, ARTOO-DETOO HAS SET ECLIPSE II'S NAVICOMPUTER TO THE COORDINATES SUPPLIED BY SHUG NINX AND SALLA ZEND!
FIRING SPASMODICALLY, THE AWESOME WEAPON EJECTS A SINGLE MISSILE INTO THE GRAVITATIONAL EMBRACE OF THE IMPERIAL THRONEWORLD.
THE PROJECTILE SUPPORTS A FULLY ARMED PARTICLE DISINTEGRATOR THAT CAN NEUTRALIZE ALL KNOWN SECURITY SHIELDS--
--AND DEMOLISH A PLANET!
THE EMPIRE JUST SHOT ITSELF IN THE HEART!
BRING UP THE HATCH AND FIRE THE SUBLIGHTS!
JUST OUR LUCK! ONCE THAT NUCLEONIC BLAST HITS THE CORE OF BYSS, WE'RE STAR SHINE!
OUTTA THE WAY, ARTOO!
BWEEEP DRPP BDEET FWEEEE!


HATCH IS SECURE--FOR LIGHT'S SAKE, CUT US LOOSE!
I...I CAN'T--ECLIPSE II IS SPINNING ON ITS AXIS!
BYSS IS GOING CRITICAL! PUNCH IT!
BRP-BRT-BRT TWEEP-A-VOOT BDRP-TIK-A TWOOP WHEEEZ!!
NICE WORK, CHEWIE--HANG ON, REBS--I'M TAKING US TO JUMP SPEED!
HNN-ROWR YRROONN NNG RARRR!*
*LONG LIVE THE NEW REPUBLIC!

Epilogue

The Imperial reign of terror has ended. In the person of Empatojayos Brand, the fire of the Jedi that was nearly extinguished has flared up into brilliance. Emperor Palpatine, who rose to despotic power on a promise of uniting the galaxy, is dead, his last clone body reduced to ashes. Palpatine will never return, and his spirit will wander forever in the shadowy madness of the evil he embraced.

News travels at lightspeed in the galaxy. Within hours, it is widely known that Byss, the Imperial throne world in the Galactic core, has been destroyed. The Emperor is gone and his Empire is in ruins. In the farthest outposts of the Rebel Alliance, a cry of victory is raised — *long live the New Republic*!

The remnants of the great fighting force forged by the resurrected Emperor and his dark adepts are scattered throughout the galaxy and across the uncharted worlds of the core. Vying amongst themselves for command, the Imperial admirals could yet represent a powerful antagonist to the war-weary Alliance, if they can settle their differences and bring together a unified fleet of Star Destroyers.

Following the safe return of the *Millennium Falcon* and its crew from the core, the leaders of the Rebellion gather on the planet Onderon, as guests of Modon Kira and his warrior clan.

There, in the venerable halls of the ancient Kira fortress, the Republic is officially reborn under the provisional leadership of Mon Mothma. Leia Organa Solo, as Minister of State, will be her second in command.

The planet Coruscant has been the seat of galactic government for millennia, and it was the seat of the New Republic during the years immediately following the Battle of Endor and the death of Darth Vader. Reconstruction of the old seat of government on Coruscant will begin immediately, and the free worlds of the galaxy are invited to send representatives to Coruscant as members of a regenerated Senate. The Senators will, in solemn deliberations, elect a new President of the Galactic Republic.

It is Leia's hope that Vima-Da-Boda, who remembers the time when the Jedi were unequaled in strength and wisdom, will live to train Han and Leia's children in the ways of the Force. But during the victory celebration in the walled city of Iziz, Vima mysteriously disappears. None of the Jedi are able to locate her, and it is not known if Vima is dead, or whether she has found passage back to her old haunts on the spaceport moon Nar Shaddaa.

For Luke Skywalker, the death of Palpatine marks the end of a terrible struggle that has consumed nearly his whole life. And it marks the beginning of a time when Luke can devote himself heart and soul to the principal task of the last living Jedi Master: Luke's remaining years will be given to the great and necessary work of restoring the Jedi Knights to pre-eminence as guardians of peace and justice throughout the galaxy.

May the Force be with you!

— Tom Veitch